Issue 3 Spring 2015

WOMANSFIELD

The female gaze from the college level.

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Equality Day at Mansfield University!
Students standing up for gender equality!

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A Word from our Sponsor

S.A.F.E. and the Women's Center at Mansfield University

S.A.F.E. (Students Advocating For Everyone), formerly REACT (Rape Educators and Contacts), is a student run origination that works in conjunction with the Women's Center on campus. We put together programs like Condom Bingo, fund the Red Flag Campaign, and have "awareness weeks" each month, such as Domestic Violence in October and Sexual Assault in April. We work with the Greek fraternity Alpha Kappa Lambda. Our meetings for the Spring 2015 semester are Thursdays at 4:00 pm at the MLK Center in Alumni. Contact Alan Zellner at ezellner@mansfield.edu for future meeting times. Come out and join us, we always welcome new members!

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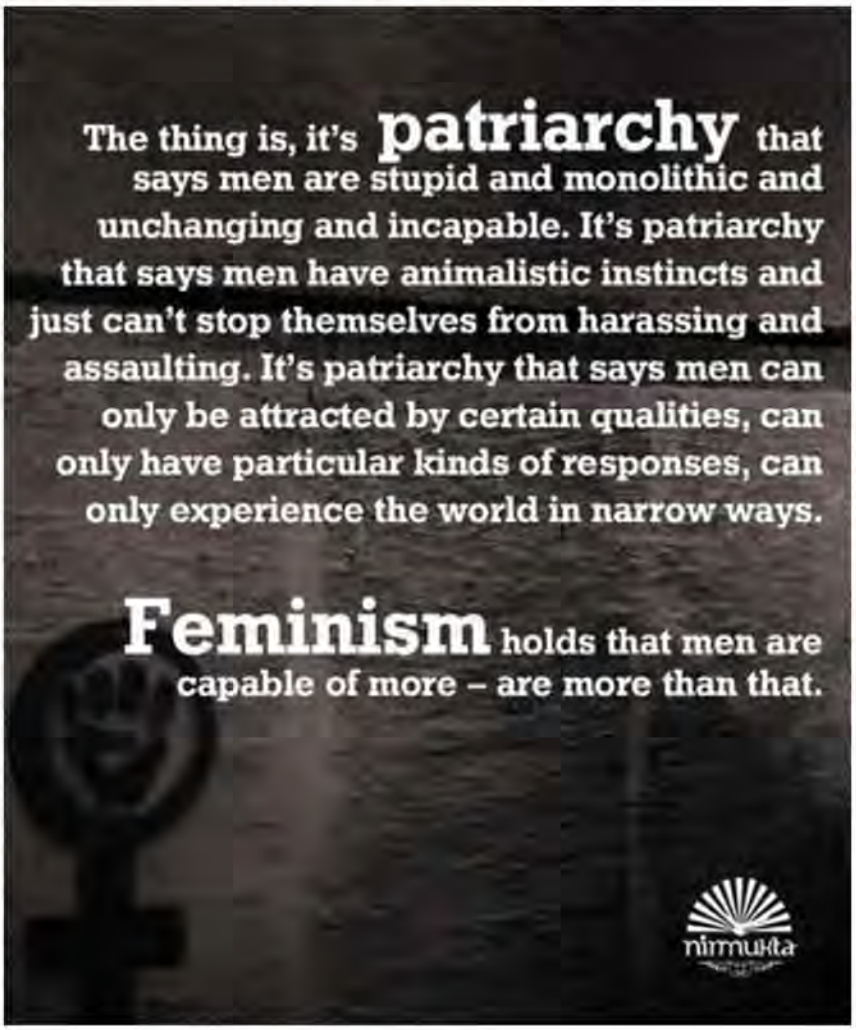
The Editors

Stereotypes & Myths of Feminism

By Janie Ghods

When someone says they are a feminist, there is automatically a negative connotation to the term. This is because of the stereotypes or myths surrounding the word, feminist or feminism. These myths or stereotypes are for example, that feminists are man-haters, ugly, hairy, lesbians, or that we are all bra-burners, that we are all pro-choice, that we hate sex, and that we don't respect stay-at-home moms. The actual definition of the word feminism from Merriam-Webster is, "the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities and an organized activity in support of women's rights and interests."

In reality, feminists do not hate men, feminism actually helps men too! Men are able to break the stereotypes about always having to prove their entire lives to only being "manly." I say beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but there are all sorts of beautiful feminists out there, on the inside too! Feminists shave, and some don't, but who cares, that is their choice. Some feminists are lesbians, and some are not, which is why some heterosexual females feel reluctant to state that they are a feminist because they could potentially be labeled a "lesbian." Bra burning was in the 70's and was/is very uncommon. There is a myth that all feminists are pro-choice, which some are not, and even the feminists who are pro-life want whatever benefits there is to offer for women who choose to have a baby. We sure do not hate sex, which is why we want to break the outrageous double-standards for women being slut-shamed for having sex, letting women have their own rights to contraception.



In the book, *The Feminist Thought,* the author states that, "Men are required to act masculine and women are required to act on feminine characteristics and the solution to this is for each and every person to be androgynous." Matthew Reyes author of *WhyFeminist.com* also has a great quote which states, "Feminism is a powerful tool that advocates for everyone's freedom of choice in how they want to live and who they want to be."

NFL Needs to Stand up for Women
By LeRon Strothers

Sexual assault and domestic violence are heavily prevalent in today's society. Often it can be found around male athletes at any university across the nation. Players at the college level have a lot of responsibilities because they are basically professionals at a young age. They cannot live the full college life of going to parties and things of that nature. There have been a lot of cases where when male athletes assault a woman they try and sweep it under the rug to protect the player and not stand up for the women in these situations. Essentially they try letting the players off the hook to protect the sports team and the school's reputation. This is also happening at the professional level as well.

When the news broke in February that former Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice was arrested for assaulting his fiancé in an elevator the NFL took no stand. It was pretty much as if they were brushing it off. The NFL has been plagued with violent incidents, but Ray Rice incident was different. He was caught by cameras on the elevator so the whole world had visual evidence of what he did. Rice avoided a trial and possible jail time by going to a domestic violence program. Was that the NFL's way of slapping him on the wrist? Or was that just the NFL letting him off the hook because he was a pro athlete? If this was a random male he probably would have been arrested. But instead, since this was a pro athlete, he was let off the hook. These players cannot be let off the hook just because of who they are. If anything, they need to be held more accountable because they are in the public eye. By letting Ray Rice get away with what he did, that is sending out the wrong message to the youth, and the young males who watch these players.

Banning Bossy

By Tierra Nelson

Ladies, have you ever been called bossy for stating your opinion? Gentlemen, have you ever been respected more for stating your opinion? Both of these questions are the same with just different meaning to it. Women are more likely to be called bossy if they speak their mind and men would be described as showing their leadership skills for speaking their mind. But, why can't both women and men be described as leaders? Some people may not think this is a major issue, but it is a major issue many overlooks.

For instance, in the New York Times, the article "Is the Professor Bossy or Brilliant? Much Depends on Gender" talks about women being called bossy. In the article, the author states, "Male professors are brilliant, awesome and knowledgeable, while women are bossy, annoying, and beautiful or ugly." This quote shows how men are being presented as strong with leadership skills and women are just deprived of these significant words. Women are being looked at for their personality and not their intelligence. Also, inside the article it talks about how students would have more bias towards women professors and not male professors because male professor are less intimidating than women. This whole article explains how women are called bossy because they have high standards and positive reinforcement.

There is a campaign named Ban Bossy that encourages girls to take the lead. You can pledge to Ban Bossy and help the spread the word. Ban Bossy has a website you can go on for more information and for leadership tips. The message that stood out to me on the Ban Bossy page was their quote. The quote stated, "When a little boy asserts himself, he's called a leader. Yet when a little girl does the same, she risks being branded bossy." I believe this quote is true and many others believe so too. I think this quote is wrong because a little girl should not be called bossy for expressing how she feels.

I interviewed two faculty members on campus, one male and one female. I interviewed them with five questions about being called bossy and those questions were:

Have your ever been called bossy before?
Have you ever been looked at differently for speaking your mind?
Should women be allowed to speak their mind with being called a name afterwards?
Why do people get called bossy when speaking their mind?
Why do men get intimidated when women take control?

The male faculty member answered:

No, I have never been called bossy.
Yes, you will always risk people liking or not liking your opinion.
Yes, I work with women and they do speak their mind and I do not judge them.
It's easy when you don't know what to do, so you use the word bossy for a good or bad situation.
They don't have a lot of experience of women taking control, so they don't know how to react to it.

The female faculty member answered:

Yes, I have been called bossy before.
Yes, but people never actually stated how they felt about we speaking my mind. They just gave me weird looks, while I was speaking.
Yes, we should be allowed to say what's on our mind freely, without feeling like we're in the wrong.
Bossy is just a word people use to cover up their fear of the truth.
Men are intimidated because women does have power just like them. They are not use to women speaking up or themselves or others.

Chilling Effect: The Problems with Mansfield University's Title IX Sexual Misconduct Policy

By Adrian Peery

In order to comply with Title IX, a Federal Law requiring equal opportunity in education, Mansfield University requires all Faculty Members to report any knowledge of sexual misconduct. There are several problems inherent in the way sexual assault allegations are handled by this university specifically and Title IX generally. These include, but are not limited to, the policy requiring all faculty members to report sexual misconduct allegations, and Title IX's requirement that universities investigate and adjudicate Felony sex crimes.

Mansfield University's current policy on reporting could have the unintended consequence of preventing students from reporting sexual misconduct. A student who is the victim of a sex crime naturally turns to a person they know and trust. In most cases the person in authority a student is most comfortable with is a professor within their own academic department. Requiring that the person report the victim's name and the relevant information to the Title IX compliance officer will prevent many students from coming forward. Being the victim of a sexual assault is an emotionally wrenching and humiliating experience. The Mansfield University reporting policy prevents victims from having a confidential conversation with a person they trust about the misconduct and their options for proceeding with a complaint.

Title IX allows John/Jane Doe reporting by designated persons in order to maintain accurate reporting while simultaneously protecting victim confidentiality. A revision of the University's policy so that it allows at least one designated Faculty Member in each academic department to report in this manner or preferably allowing the students themselves to make the decision about how the allegation is reported would allow the student to contact any Faculty member that they are comfortable with. Even with this change in procedure Title IX's requirement that universities handle the investigation of these crimes places a burden on the University that no university is equipped to handle. According to Title IX, the investigation of sexual misconduct is the responsibility of the University's Title IX compliance officer. The Community Conduct officer then decides if the case merits a referral to the disciplinary board. The problem with this procedure is that the job these University officials are required to do is one that is properly handled by law enforcement officers and the District Attorney's Office. The investigation of felony sex crimes can and should be handled by the criminal justice system. Victims should be aware that reporting a sex crime to the police does not require the victim to press charges it simply allows the collection of evidence and preserves the ability to prosecute the offender of they choose to.

Mansfield University not only needs to do a better job of not only disseminating information on Title IX to the students, it also needs to implement a mandatory reporting policy that does not have the potential effect of preventing victims of sexual misconduct from seeking guidance from trusted members of the Faculty. Like many of the students here if I were to be victimized I would not be comfortable discussing my options for filing a complaint with someone I had never met, nor would I wish to have the ability to decide to keep an assault confidential taken away from me for any reason whatsoever.

A Presentation on Rape Culture
By Samantha James

Considering how high rape statistics are and how under-reported the crime is, I decided to go back to my high school and talk to juniors and seniors in a Criminal Fiction class about the topic. I went in and started out with a pre-test. After collecting them, I reviewed the results while the students watched a Laci Green YouTube video about blaming the victim. When asked what a rapist looks like, most of the answers sounded something like this, "A man in his 20's or 30's with dark hair, a mustache, scruffy, and just over all creepy looking." When asked about where most rapes occur the responses were overwhelmingly consistent, stating that most rapes occur in the city, at night, in an ally. When asked if consent can be given while intoxicated, the majority stated that the answer was yes. I realized that this was part of the problem. Why don't these young adults know about rape? Why don't they know the how, where, when, who? They were mostly clueless. After they watched Laci Green's YouTube video on victim blaming and hearing from me about statistics stated in Jessica Valenti's *Full Frontal Feminism*, they learned just how rampant rape is in our culture and how often it occurs on college campuses. They also learned that consent cannot be given when intoxicated. Not only does no mean no, but there are circumstances when yes does not mean yes, and the absence of a no is also not a yes. I also discussed rape culture. I explained to them what it is and how it appears in everyone's daily lives. Over all they were a receptive audience and the post-test showed that they did learn something. What I learned from this is that we need to refine our health education to include more about rape and rape culture. With prom season quickly approaching, my hope is that they take this knowledge and not only put it to good use, but share it as well.

Women Not Being Heard

By Marlee Pick

Imagine being in a room full of men. Then picture yourself voicing your opinion or thoughts and not having any one of them acknowledge that you are there or even said anything. How would that make you feel? Would you feel hurt, frustrated, upset, or even stressed out? Many women throughout the years have struggled with this issue over and over again. This issue happens to women wherever they are, but it mostly occurs in the workplace.

When a woman tries to speak in a professional setting, she may be walking on a thin line. Sometimes when speaking, women are not heard enough, and when voicing opinions, they are judged harshly by what they say. The result of not being taken seriously or being heard often makes women decide to keep quiet rather than letting individuals hear what they have to say. On the other hand, when a man voices his opinion, he is listened to and is given appreciation for his opinions.

As I went around the Mansfield University campus asking female students if they have ever experienced their voice not being heard, I found the feedback to be quite positive. Many of the women that I interviewed said that they have not experienced this issue themselves. However, there were a few older women that said when they were younger they did experience this issue, but now that they are older they do not experience the issue as much. An example from one of the women that experienced this issue when they were younger said that they were not listened to when she was talking to a male doctor.

Overall, from the survey that I completed, I came to the conclusion that as a society we are becoming better at listening to others around us and with that women are being heard more today. As the years have gone on, more women are fulfilling important roles and being heard more than they used to be. We are making progress in realizing that women and men are equal, but we are taking it one step at a time.

Having "Too Many" Sexual Partners
By Celestine Featherstone

Does it surprise you that women are being called sluts for sleeping with more than five people? Throughout history the double standard of sexual partners has become a big issue. While no one's numbers of sexual partners should matter it does. Why you might ask? Well because chances are that if you are a woman you have been called a slut at least once in your life. However, if you're a man then you've been praised at least twice in your life for having a lot of sexual partners. Not only does the double standard of sexual partners exist but it affects a lot of women.

On my quest to find out the double standard of sexual partners, I conducted a survey asking thirty college students at Mansfield University if they believed that females that have too many sexual partners were called sluts and males were praised or called studs. It was interesting that there was a slight difference between if guys and girls are praised because of how many sexual partners they have. Many believed that girls should not get praised no matter what the number of partners is, but there should be more than five girls a guy has to sleep with for him to get praised. That's when double standards play a role. Guys and girls should be treated the same when it comes to how many sexual partners they have.

According to an article called "Rawness," they believe that there is not a double standard. They claim that frankly it's hard for guys to get girls so when they sleep with them that they should get praised for it. Well isn't that just stupid to say? Just because a guy can't get a girl—get over it—he shouldn't get praised for sleeping with them if the girl is going to be called a slut.

Although, it doesn't surprise me that women who are called sluts are not really sluts. Many people spread rumors that girls are sluts regardless of how many sexual partners they have because they know it is damaging. In reality, it doesn't matter how many sexual partners you have as long as they are all consensual.

There is still room for plenty of improvements even in today's society. So guys and girls remember that sexual double standards do exist. It is not okay to call a girl a slut because of the number of sexual partners she has. Guys remember that you should never want to get praised for having a lot of sexual partners because most girls don't find that attractive! And as always, if you are having sex make sure you use

The Trouble with Cat-Calling

By Briana Nelson

Have you ever been cat called while walking down the street? It usually happens to young females between the ages of 13-19. Mostly, guys are the ones who cat call. Cat calling occurs in both urban and suburban areas. Most females hate being cat called because it makes them feel as though they cannot walk down the street without being looked at provocatively.

A female doesn't believe that a guy genuinely wants to know how her day is going when he shouts it at her as she walks by him on the street. Some females feel unsafe after being cat called while walking down the street. Some women just feel like the guys that cat call are low life jerks. In urban areas some females will wear extra clothing while going to the store, just so they won't get cat called by a guy in their neighborhood. Guys in urban areas tend to not just cat call, but also try to pull your arm or touch your hand. It seems like they would do anything to get a woman's attention. But what guys don't realize is that cat calling turns most females off. Also, some guys will go as far as to follow a female all the way to her destination.

I asked a few females about how they feel being cat-called, and one particular female stood out for me. She said "They may just seem like words, but how these cat-callers approach me makes me feel belittled and afraid." What guys don't realize is cat calling is sexual harassment. Cat calling can scare females. Some guys think there's nothing wrong with saying "Hey baby, nice body," but it makes females uncomfortable because they generally don't know the man.

Why do guys cat call? In my opinion, guys cat call to get a female's attention. That is their way of trying to get a woman's number or a good reaction from them. Some guys actually do it around their friends. They do this because it makes them feel like a big wheel in front of their friends. Also, some guys know that cat calling annoys females and do it just to get a rise.

I surveyed 10 different females between the ages of 13-19. The first five females I survey were from the urban area, and the other five females were from suburban area. I asked them questions like "Have you ever been cat called?" "How does it make you feel?" and "Do you like being cat called?" My results from urban and suburban females were similar. It showed that most females did not like being cat called.

How can we stop this? First ladies we can tell guys that cat calling is a major turn off. Also we can tell our brothers and male relatives how cat calling really make us feel. Maybe this will help them realize how cat calling affects female. Because no brother or male family member wants to see a female in their family get cat-called. They can pass the word to their friends and help to stop the larger problem.

Date Rape: Keep Our Women Safe

By Mark Davis

According to the Washington post 1 out of every 5 girls will be sexually assaulted in college. Date rape is a drug associated with sexual assault. Victims of date rape are drugged with the use of alcohol, pills and other things of that nature which limits their ability to giving consent for sexual contact. Even though males are sexually assaulted and raped as well as females, females are mainly targeted because of their stereotype of being vulnerable. The drug most frequently used by rapists and sex offenders to subdue victims is called Rohypnol. It is used at parties, large gatherings, and even entertainment performances. This drug is used by slipping it into someone's drink while they are unaware of what is going on. Hence, the saying "Never leave your drink unattended!" is always told to young people when they go to college. This type of epidemic occurs mostly in crowded areas at parties that are so huge that no one pays attention to small things as someone putting this in another's drink. There are many ways to avoid this from happening, but not going out and having fun is not the answer. Also, it is not always the female's job to use safety tips to protect herself either. And so, here are some safety tips that males can use and take the initiative and help protect our women at parties from being raped or sexually assaulted.

No Means No!

When talking to a female at a party and she says she's not interested or doesn't want to do anything with you, then you should just walk away. You don't want to force yourself upon her or her friends because No Means No.

Don't Encourage Peer Pressure!

While partying in college males will have friends or see others trying to plan sexual assaults or be a witness to a rape incident. Men should be that person that says no or tell their friends that planning to bring harm sexually or violently to a female is wrong. And so, men should not doing anything that could get them in trouble or affect someone else's life in that way.

Avoid looking the other way!

When you see your see your brother, friend, classmate, or whoever it is taking advantage of a female due to her being intoxicated or unable to take care of herself you should step up and say something. Drugging a female or allowing her to be sexually assaulted or raped is unacceptable.

Take Initiative!

If you see a female at party having a good time and see someone put something in her drink or think that she could be in a situation where should she could be assaulted say something. Walk up to her respectfully to warn her or ask if everything is alright to ensure that you are a helping hand for her.

Raise Awareness!

Don't just let females speak up for these issues. Be that guy who helps them express the message of preventing sexual assault and rape. Stand up because these issues don't just affect women, but it affects males as well because anyone can become a victim of sexual assault.

Overlooked

By Damarkus D Jones

Sexual harassment and sexual assault are topics that are barely discussed in high schools. High schools mission should be to educate students, families, and schools about sexual assault prevention and the right to an equal education free of sexual harassment. During the four years I spent with Abraham Lincoln's High school athletic teams; sexual harassment and sexual assault were topics that were never addressed to the athletes. My first year as a freshman at Mansfield University, sexual harassment and sexual assault and the consequences were all addressed on and off the football field and even in the classroom.

In high school I was unaware of how serious sexual assault and harassment was. It was never discussed by any of my coaches nor any of my teachers. Now knowing the meaning of the two, it makes me think about the young women in high schools that are being abused every day by the student athletes. Studies show that sports is a male dominated institution and females have always experienced different forms of discrimination, such as sexual victimization from coaches and male athletes. Other research shows that female athletes have a higher rate of sexual victimization from authority figures in sports than the females that aren't involved in any sports.

In an article by Kari Fasting, she says "Athletic participation can protect females from sexual harassment and assault. It involves social psychological mechanisms such as team leadership, physical strength, and self-confidence." As a former high school athlete I have witnessed multiple incidents were a student athlete would sexually harass or assault a f emale student athlete, such as a cheerleader, and think there was no wrong in what they have done. During the incidents, the girls were afraid to tell someone and they also feared being labeled as a snitch.

Besides high school female athletes I have also witnessed team managers get harassed by the male athletes. Many cases of sexual harassment go unannounced and I believe the majority of the cases that go unheard are from high school female athletes and team managers. Female student athletes are significantly less likely to report sexual victimization during their late high school and early college years than their non-athletic counterparts. Also there are many times where people have seen incidents happened and the reason why they couldn't tell anyone is because they did not know how to go about the incident and whether or not they should just keep it to themselves.

I have created a survey for previous and active cheerleaders and female team managers. I am focusing on cheerleaders more than any other female sport since they seem more likely to be the victims of sexual harassment and assault. My survey consisted of a few questions about their experience with their high school team and whether or not they have been touched by players, coaches, and/or fans. After I have a significant amount of surveys completed I plan to share my information with the "Stop Sexual Assault in High School" page on Facebook. The page is trying to teach high schools about Sexual Assault and harassment. Hopefully the surveys will open the eyes of high schools and establish a way to make sexual harassment and assault more relevant and known in our high schools.

The Glass Ceiling for Women Teachers

By Rachelle Boyd

How would you feel if you couldn't advance in your position if you were a teacher? Even though teachers have a hard time advancing to a higher position, they were happy with their job. This is not surprising because most of the women teachers feel that in a man's world they cannot advance to a higher position. One of the survey questions that I asked was, do you feel that you could move up into a higher position if you chose to? Why or why not? Many of the responses that I received were in general yes in any other district but this one because the administrative system and school board is predominantly male.

Many feel that it would not be easy for a female to work her way into the pre-existing group. Another question that I asked was how do you feel about the current administrative system? Many of them answered that they would live with it or that it was fine. Some even answered that they were neutral. Others that answered felt that it needed improvement. Many teachers feel that in administration that it's a thankless job that would not be worth their time. I also had a hard time getting them to answer all of the questions. Most of the surveys that I was handed back were one word answers or some of the questions were blank.

Another problem that I saw with the survey was that felt that they couldn't move up into a higher position because they don't have the degree and seem to not want to pursue that degree. I also noticed that most of them felt that the administrative system needed changed but they don't feel that they can do anything about it. I find that to be a huge problem. Women can do anything that they set their minds to. Many women stop somewhere between a high school degree and a bachelor's degree. It is rare to see someone go higher in their education and earn a doctorate degree. My challenge to everyone reading is to go as far as possible in your education. In the future I would like to hand out this survey and get answers that they have the degree and are pursuing higher positions in any field. It's not just limited to the education profession.

LGBTQ Discrimination in Sports

By Perry Cook

In the beginning, the LGBTQ community was often treated badly in sports. We couldn't be in the locker room without getting treated like crap. Schools have tried to cause LGBTQ to change in different rooms. My school forced me to change in the teacher's office because the guys on my basketball team were uncomfortable changing in front of me. We have even been kicked off sports teams because of our sexual orientation. Now, we are starting to see open gay athlete. Yet, they still run into discrimination from other players and the media. I interviewed coaches and players from Mansfield University and I found out that they all had different opinions on the topic. In the interview, I was told that there are LGBTQ players on the teams here. These players will do whatever they can to protect their teams from the discrimination that they know that occurs. They told me they know about it but did not witness any discrimination on campus. They all seemed to hit on the fact that discrimination of LGBTQ usually occurs more in guy's sports than women's sports. They all felt that LGBTQ should be allowed to play sports without being discriminated against and I agree. I interviewed a Mansfield University coach and he said that he doesn't look at the player for their sexual orientation. He looks at them for their ability to play sports. The coaches on campus show that we are working to stop discrimination, but we are not totally there yet. This is an issue that's worldwide and we all need to be aware of it and stop the discrimination in its tracks.

LGBT
SPORTS COALITION
MOVE FORWARD

Consent is Sexy

rape[1]

[reyp]

Spell Syllables

Word Origin

noun

1. unlawful sexual intercourse or any other sexual penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person, with or without force, by a sex organ, other body part, or foreign object, without the consent of the victim.

Warning: This article contains content about rape that may be sensitive for some readers

We see it nearly every day: someone forces themselves upon someone else without proper consent and instead of placing the blame on the rapist, it falls on the head of the victim. This is an act called victim blaming. Instead of people wrapping their heads around the idea that the rapist is at fault, they look for reasons to blame the victim. If it's a woman, common claims of blame are that she was flirting, she was dressed too provocatively, or that she was asking for it. Newsflash: No one asks to be raped!

If it's a man, that's where people get confused. One of the common misconceptions is that men cannot be raped, so they get blamed too. He was turned on, so he must have been enjoying it… or he was getting laid! How could he possibly complain about that? Or how does a woman even go about raping a man? However, it's not always a woman that rapes a man, is it?

To draw attention to victim blaming, I conducted a survey among about 30 of my peers. It was evenly split, 15 were male, and 15 were female. In the survey, I presented three scenarios which were all examples of rape. I then asked the participants to answer three questions: Do you think this is rape? (Yes or no). How at fault is the male? (Not at all, a little, entirely). How at fault is the female? (Not at all, a little, entirely).

I hypothesized that the men would be more likely to victim blame, especially when it came to the scenario in which a male was raped. However, the results were a bit of a surprise. While there were some that didn't victim blame at all, the vast majority, both males and females, did tend to blame the victim.

This was only a small group of people, so I can't speak for the world, but I do believe it's a good representation of the way a lot of others think. The important thing to remember is this: No one asks to be violated against their will. No one asks to be traumatized. No one asks to have their feeling of safety taken from them. No one asks to be raped.

Just because I am a Cheerleader.....

By Ariel Faber

Cheerleading has always been considered a "girl thing" because of the uniforms, make-up, hair and performing aspects of what they do. What is often times overlooked is that a great amount of athleticism goes into being a good cheerleader. The stunts and gymnastics they perform require a lot of body strength and endurance. Not all women have the muscle strength to do these things that is why many college teams have begun to recruit men. High school teams across have tried to do the same however there have been many cases where the administration has blocked the participation of a man on a cheerleading squad. Also, these men are more likely to be teased and bullied by their classmates. The harassment that these men face can be directly related to the male stereotypes we have as a society.

High school is brutal for almost anyone but it can be especially brutal for men who participate in cheerleading instead of traditionally masculine sports. I saw this first hand in my high school. Our cheerleading team was lucky enough to have had a couple of men participate on the team. Even though they did not do any of the dances or cheers they were still harassed for doing something "girly." One of my former male teammates remembers this vividly, "I was always asked why cheerleading? That's a girl thing! Then they would ask me if I was gay." He remembers being angry about this because he would constantly be told that he must be gay if he was cheerleading. The harassment that he received was the same as the other men who participated on the team and this happens in other schools around the country. Male cheerleaders from a Chicago All Star team to the University of Arizona have had similar experiences. Other men ostracize them and accuse them of being gay even though cheerleading is a better fit for these men in comparison to football, soccer or basketball and is often a more viable option for college scholarships.

The perceptions of these men being different is not helped by sports administrations who disqualify high school cheerleading squads at competitions if they have a male on the team. Even though females are allowed to participate in traditionally all male sports like wrestling and football, so why can't males participate in cheerleading? The Michigan High School Athletic Association made this statement after disqualifying a cheerleading team at a competition for having a male participant, "Boys may not participate on a girls team in MHSAA sponsored postseason meets and tournaments. Schools have adopted this position to preserve participation opportunities for the historically underrepresented gender." While the intention may be good it still is discriminatory against males who want to participate. It also feeds the idea that there is something wrong with a male who wishes to be a part of a cheerleading team since it is a female sport.

We need to change the perception that cheerleading is just a girls sport; my high school team was stronger and better in competition because we had men on our team. The thing that stuck out to me the most when I was talking to my former teammate was when he said, "I had to tell people, and just because I am a cheerleader doesn't mean I am gay." That was a powerful statement that made me realize how damaging our stereotypes are especially in sports. Men should have the same opportunities as women to participate in cheerleading by their administrations and peers.

You Don't Need Them to be Beautiful

By Joe Utegg

Women between the ages of 16-26 please listen because I have important information that will not only show you that you're all beautiful but also save you money. When you hear the words lingerie, sexy, or seductive what comes to your mind? For most people they relate these words to the largest retail store of lingerie, *Victoria's Secret* or VS. This retailer has brought in billions of dollars over the last decade or so because they make women think that buying their products will increase the amount of beauty and attractiveness they have toward the opposite sex. I have a problem with this for three reasons. My personal family members have bought into this false truth. Through experience I have found that you can find the same product for cheaper that does the same work as those overpriced products from VS, and VS doesn't embrace the truth that all sizes are beautiful.

VS has been challenged by *Lane Bryant* in the way of showing women that all shapes and sizes are beautiful with their "I'm No Angel" movement. Lane Bryant has made an ad campaign against VS to show that the super skinny is out and the regular body is in. This empowerment is needed and I fully support this movement. If you look at these pictures it can be seen that VS and Lane Bryant have very different definitions on what beautiful is.

The products that both of these companies sell and provide to women aren't very different. Both stores products provide both support and comfort to those intimate areas. But when you compare the prices they are so far from each other. VS can charge up to eighty plus dollars for one bra whereas Lane Bryant will sell a bra for more than half the price of VS. Lane Bryant prices range between twenty and thirty dollars for a bra. Those prices are the same even for plus sizes at Lane Bryant's. VS will sell an upper-sized bra for as much as 110-120 dollars.

VS has millions of dollars annually that get put towards ad campaigns that are made so that young women feel bad about themselves and that buying VS products is the only way to make themselves feel like they have worth. My sister is nowhere the size of those models but she isn't considered plus size. She saw these ads over and over everywhere she went and during everything she did. The ads made her self-esteem and worth plummet into the ground. She would starve herself and then workout for countless hours until she felt she was pretty enough for the world. She ended up having to go to a facility because she didn't feel good enough. VS has made millions off of insecurities and Lane Bryant has it right with embracing the female body in all its shapes and forms. VS needs to change for the safety of the impressionable.

The Effects of Pop Culture on African American Women

By: Chantele Pearson

What pops in your head when you think of the words pop culture? Is it entertainment? Music? How about celebrities? Yeah well maybe that is the gist of it but that's not all that it consists of. Imagine a young African American girl flipping through television shows after a day at school and she comes across a music video with the hottest artist out today. Does she turn or continue to watch it? More than likely she'll watch it because it caught her eye.

From the money being flashed to, beautiful sceneries, to the video vixens and last but not least the artist whether they are attractive or not. Looking from the outside in this young girl is being sold this dream. I certainly have fed into a couple of those dreams a few times myself. Seeing the girls in the videos with the ideal bodies, long beautiful hair and gorgeous skin makes it seem as if in order to live the life portrayed in these videos that I, as an African American woman, have to display these characteristics.

Now I know that these particular things are used to get people to like the music and even sell it, but for young girls and women that isn't always the message being picked up. It's bad enough that in my generation there's this whole light skin vs. dark skin epidemic going on, which can and probably does cause insecurity issues for girls of either skin tone. So seeing a beautiful light skinned female with a big butt and a nice body in these videos can tarnish a girl's self-esteem level and vice versa. Although I am not downplaying the women in these videos, it would help a lot if all different body shapes, skin tones, and even hair textures were shown in some of them. Maybe then those with a little more curves, pounds, or any other type of "imperfection" may feel more confident about themselves. After all nobody is perfect!

Breaking the Bad Truth of Skyler White

By Courtney Wark

The story of passive and sickly chemistry teacher turned meth dealer, Walter White, first appeared on television screens in 2008. Vince Gilligan's crime drama Breaking Bad, which shows Walter's decision to turn to the crystal meth business in order to provide for his family after discovering he has inoperable lung cancer, quickly rose to fame throughout its five seasons. By the end of the series in 2013, the show was regarded as one of the best shows of all time and was among America's most watched cable television shows that year. However, the popularity of a television show is not always a good thing.

The show, like many that follow the antihero plot, has a strong focus on masculinity and what it means to be a man. In the world of *Breaking Bad,* being a man revolves around power, control, and dominance. In the beginning of the show, Walter is depicted as weak. His wife, Skyler, confronts Jesse Pinkman when she thinks he is selling weed to her husband. Jesse later yells at Walt saying, "Good job wearing the pants in the family." This is where the issues of the show begin. As Walter attempts to "wear the pants" he begins to dominate and control Skyler to such an extent that she attempts suicide. Skyler is essentially a domestic abuse victim. She is forced into silence, she fears for her life and the well-being of her children, and is emotionally attacked by Walter regularly. Yet, the nature of the show leads fans to root for Walt, a murderous meth cook, and scorn Skyler for everything she does, good or bad.

Now, the hatred of a television show character may seem unimportant. But the hatred of Skyler White goes above and beyond simple dislike. The show's focus on masculinity is so heavy that it can appear to be anti-feminist and the persuasive nature of these messages can be seen by the way the public responds to Skyler. The woman-hating in the show went viral causing memes such as "Scumbag Skyler" and "Hypocrite Skyler White" to pop up all over the internet along with many "I Hate Skyler White" and "Skyler White is a Bitch" fan pages and blogs. Eventually, the hatred went so deep that people even threatened to harm Anna Gunn, the actress who portrays Skyler White. The threats were so vicious that Gunn even commented in an interview that she "often feared for her life."

But why do people hate Skyler so much? Anna Gunn wrote in "I Have A Character Issue," her article commenting on the backlash from her role as Skyler, that she believes its "because Skyler didn't conform to a comfortable ideal of the archetypical female." I agree. The show presents Skyler as an antagonist to Walt rather than as a wife who is experiencing normal human reactions to finding out her husband has terminal cancer and is now cooking meth.

Viewers drool over how cool and "badass" they think Walt is for having so much power, but the second Skyler stands up for herself its game over. Suddenly you can't hear the TV over the noise of people calling her a bitch simply for not wanting her husband to be in danger. And when Skyler, no longer in love with her husband, sleeps with another man, does anyone understand? No she is punished for being a sexual being, called a slut, and demonized for treating her husband that way (never mind that he's running around killing people over drugs).

This is the real "bad" of *Breaking Bad.* Antiheros are all in good fun, but the overpowering masculinity of Walter White is not okay. The feminist fight for equal rights is a war that is still waging on. It is necessary for people to open their eyes and see beyond the television screen to the negative messages that popular shows are perpetuating. The truth is, it's okay to like Walter White. It's okay not to like Skyler White. But it is not okay to joke about and romanticize the abuse and hatred of women through television shows.

Interested in raising awareness through programming and/or serving as an advocate for students?

Students Advocating for Everyone (SAFE) is the organization for you! SAFE is a peer education group that specializes and raises awareness in issues related to relationship violence, women's issues, and sexual violence! If you are interested in S.A.F.E., contact Alan Zellner at ezellner@mansfield.edu